

# The “True” Romantic: Benevolent Sexism and Paternalistic Chivalry



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Previous research has shown that individuals high in benevolent sexism positively evaluate women who conform to traditional gender roles (e.g., Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Warner, & Zhu, 1997). In the current study, male and female participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) and a new measure of *paternalistic chivalry*, that is, attitudes that are both courteous and considerate to women but place restrictions on behavior considered appropriate for women during courtship. Consistent with our hypotheses, benevolent sexism was significantly positively related to paternalistic chivalry. Hostile sexism and participant sex were unrelated to paternalistic chivalry.

**KEY WORDS:** benevolent; hostile; sexism; paternalism; chivalry.

Social psychological accounts of sexism have tended to emphasize hostile attitudes toward women (e.g., Spence & Helmreich, 1972; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). However, researchers have also reported findings that suggest that women may be more positively stereotyped in comparison to men (e.g., Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1991). Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed that sexism may not manifest as a unitary hostility toward women. Rather, *hostile sexism* may coexist with subjectively positive sexist attitudes toward women, that is, *benevolent sexism*. According to Glick and Fiske (1996; see also Glick et al., 2000), benevolent sexism comprises a set of attitudes that favor keeping women in restricted roles, but are subjectively positive in feeling tone. Such attitudes may result in male behavior that could be considered prosocial. For example, studies have shown that female targets are more likely than male targets to elicit help from male strangers (Eagly & Crowley, 1986; Vrugt & Nauta, 1995). Despite such apparently positive outcomes, Glick and Fiske (1996)

have argued that benevolent sexism is not good for women because it is rooted in the traditional assumptions that women are the “weaker” sex, who are dependent on men for their survival.

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is a 22-item measure that was developed to assess individual levels of hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Researchers who have used the ASI have reported findings that are consistent with the hypothesized hostile sexism and benevolent sexism subscales (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Masser & Abrams, 1999). These studies have also consistently shown that benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are significantly positively correlated. As such, individuals who are high in hostile sexism are also likely to be high in benevolent sexism. Despite such paradoxical findings, Glick and Fiske (1996) maintain that benevolent sexism and hostile sexism have “...opposing evaluative implications, fulfilling the literal meaning of ambivalence.” They have argued that ambivalent sexists reconcile their ambivalence by classifying women into “good” and “bad” subcategories. Consistent with this argument, Glick, Diebold, Bailey-Warner, and Zhu (1997) found that benevolent sexism was significantly related to the positive evaluations of women who conform to traditional gender roles (e.g., mothers

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and wives), whereas hostile sexism was significantly related to the negative evaluations of women that violate traditional gender roles (e.g., feminists and career women). Thus, hostile and benevolent sexism can be viewed as complementary ideologies that serve to maintain men's dominance over women.

### The Current Study

In this article, we report a study that provides further evidence that the benevolent feelings tapped by the ASI may indeed constitute sexist attitudes. Specifically, we explored benevolently sexist attitudes as to what constitutes appropriate behavior for women within intimate/dating relationships. Glick et al. (2000) noted that individuals high in benevolent sexism strongly believe that men need women in their lives in order to be happy. However, individuals high in benevolent sexism also strongly believe that men ought to protect and look after the women in their lives. We propose that the above beliefs may result in a set of attitudes we term *paternalistic chivalry*. These attitudes may be marked by extreme politeness and considerate behavior toward women but also place restrictions on the roles women may play during courtship. For example, individuals who endorse paternalistic chivalry may believe that it is up to a man to ask a woman out on a date, and consider it highly inappropriate for a woman to ask a man out on a date.

It is possible to argue that the term *paternalistic chivalry* is rather tautological. After all, chivalrous behavior is essentially men doing all the "work" during courtship while women play a more passive role. However, we believe that it is possible for men to be polite and considerate to women, without simultaneously placing restrictions on how women should behave in relationships (e.g., individuals may believe it is okay for both men and women to play active roles in the development of a relationship). In our view, such behavior constitutes general interpersonal politeness, and not chivalry. For purposes of the current research, we use the term *paternalistic chivalry* to highlight attitudes that are both courteous and restrictive to women.

The above definition of paternalistic chivalry is consistent with how Glick et al. (2000) described benevolent sexism. Indeed, Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed that other sexism scales (e.g., The Modern Sexism Scale; Swim et al., 1995) may be more predictive of gender-related political attitudes, whereas hostile sexism and benevolent sexism may be of more

predictive value within gender-based interpersonal relationships. However, we are not aware of any studies that have directly explored the relationship between benevolent sexism and general beliefs concerning how women should behave during courtship or dating relationships. Glick et al.'s research examined the role of benevolent sexism in people's evaluations of specific subtypes of women (i.e., mothers and wives; Glick et al., 1997). As such, research findings that indicate that benevolent sexism is related to conservative beliefs concerning how women should behave within intimate relationships would converge with Glick et al.'s findings (Glick et al., 1997) and offer further support for the argument that benevolent sexism, although positively valenced, restricts women's freedom. Such findings would also have important implications for the general societal assumption that women are fortunate because they have men to take care of them.

On the basis of previous research (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Glick et al., 1997) and because paternalistic chivalry describes attitudes toward women that are subjectively positive, we expected benevolent sexism (rather than hostile sexism) to predict participants' endorsement of paternalistic chivalry. Specifically, the higher individuals' levels of benevolent sexism, the more they should endorse paternalistic chivalry. Previous research has also shown that women are more willing to accept benevolent sexism, in comparison to hostile sexism, because they perceive it as prosocial (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Kilianksi & Rudman, 1998). As such, we did not expect participant sex to predict individual differences in paternalistic chivalry after the effects of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism had been accounted for.

## METHOD

### Participants

One hundred and forty-two students (54 men, 88 women) from the University of Kent took part in this study. Of the participants, 92.3% were aged 17–29 years, 5.6% aged 30–40 years, and 2.1% aged above 40 years. Eighty-eight percent of the participants classified themselves as British, whereas 12% were non-British. Of the participants, 95.1% were first language English speakers, whereas 4.6% spoke English as a second language. However, all the participants in the current study reported that they were fluent English speakers.

## Materials

All participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), which is a 22-item scale that measures individual differences in ambivalent sexism. The ASI consists of two 11-item subscales (Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism). The inventory is comprised mainly of statements concerning male–female relationships, to which participants have to indicate their level of agreement. Examples of items are “Women seek to gain power by getting control over men” (hostile sexism) and “Women should be cherished and protected by men” (benevolent sexism).

Participants then completed a 16-item measure that assessed the extent to which they endorsed paternalistically chivalrous beliefs (e.g., “During a date, a man should protect the woman if she is being harassed by other men”; see Appendix A). The current authors were not aware of any published scales that assess individual differences in paternalistic chivalry. As such, we generated a number of statements concerning male–female relationships, and, from these, selected 16 items that we believed tapped into the construct we were attempting to measure (i.e., beliefs concerning women’s roles during courtship or dating). The current study, therefore, constitutes the first empirical examination of the reliability and validity characteristics of our measure of paternalistic chivalry. All scales used in this study were accompanied by a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

## Procedure

Data were collected as part of a mass testing session in a university lecture theater. Participants took part in this study in return for a course credit. After they were seated in the lecture theater, participants were handed the questionnaire and asked to complete it in silence. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked, debriefed, and dismissed.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

Because of potential similarities between the items that measure benevolent sexism and those that measure paternalistic chivalry, exploratory factor analyses (principal axis factoring with a promax

rotation) were performed on all the items employed in this study. This analysis was conducted to eliminate any items in the paternalistic chivalry scale that may be redundant (i.e., highly loading on either the benevolent sexism or the hostile sexism subscale). This analysis yielded three interpretable factors (i.e., paternalistic chivalry, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism). However, six items from the paternalistic chivalry scale also loaded highly onto the benevolent sexism factor (item loadings ranged from .37 to .75, see Appendix A). As such, to avoid an overlap in constructs, these items were dropped from the paternalistic chivalry scale and are not considered in further analysis. A further factor analysis was performed on the items that assess benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, and paternalistic chivalry (excluding the six cross-loading items). The items were found to load onto three distinct factors (i.e., paternalistic chivalry, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism; item loadings ranged from .41 to .85). The 10 remaining items from the paternalistic chivalry scale were then averaged to provide a composite score for each participant ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Composite scores for hostile sexism ( $\alpha = .89$ ) and benevolent sexism ( $\alpha = .88$ ) were also computed for each participant.

In order to examine gender differences in benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, and paternalistic chivalry, a between-subjects MANOVA was performed. Significant multivariate effects of gender, determined with Wilk’s Lambda, were obtained,  $F(3, 138) = 4.83$ ,  $p < .01$ . Univariate analysis of variance revealed that men scored higher than women on both the benevolent sexism subscale ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ;  $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 1.18$  respectively),  $F(1, 140) = 11.40$ ,  $p < .001$ , and hostile sexism subscale ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ;  $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.03$  respectively),  $F(1, 140) = 9.03$ ,  $p < .01$ . In contrast, no significant gender differences for the measure of paternalistic chivalry were obtained ( $F < 1$ ). Correlation analyses were also performed and these yielded significant correlations between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism for both male and female participants,  $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ , and  $r = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ , respectively. The above results are all consistent with previous research on the ASI (e.g., Glick et al., 2000; Masser & Abrams, 1999).

### Main Analyses

Given the significant relationships among our predictor variables, multiple regression analysis was performed to test our main hypotheses. Participant

sex, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism were entered simultaneously as predictors of paternalistic chivalry. The overall regression model was significant,  $F(3, 138) = 10.78$ ,  $p < .001$ . As expected, a significant positive relationship between benevolent sexism and paternalistic chivalry was obtained,  $\beta = .36$ ,  $t = 4.03$ ,  $p < .001$ . These findings indicate that individuals who are high in benevolent sexism are more likely to endorse paternalistic chivalry than are individuals low in benevolent sexism. Consistent with our hypothesis, participant sex and hostile sexism did not significantly predict individual differences in paternalistic chivalry,  $\beta = .07$ ,  $t = 0.91$ , *ns* and  $\beta = .13$ ,  $t = 1.45$ , *ns*, respectively. Similar regression analyses were also performed on the original 16-item Paternalistic Chivalry Scale. A pattern of results similar to the one obtained above was observed. Hierarchical regression analyses were then conducted to test whether the main effects reported above were qualified by significant interaction effects (Jaccard, Turrisi, & Wan, 1990). This analysis yielded no significant two-way or three-way interaction effects (all  $ps > .05$ ), which suggests that the significant main effects for benevolent sexism reported above were not qualified by any interaction effects.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the current study are consistent with our main hypotheses. A significant positive relationship between benevolent sexism and paternalistic chivalry was obtained. This relationship was significant when the effects of hostile sexism and participant sex were accounted for. In contrast, hostile sexism and participant sex were not related to paternalistic chivalry, and no significant interaction effects were obtained. These results suggest that individuals that are high in benevolent sexism are more likely to support a belief system in which women are treated with courtesy and consideration but are restricted in the roles they may play within intimate relationships (cf. Glick et al., 1997). It appears to be case that high benevolent sexism individuals prefer intimate male–female relationships in which men wield the power. The current study adds to the literature on ambivalent sexism by providing empirical evidence that benevolent sexism is related to conservative beliefs about how women should behave during courtship or dating relationships. These results also converge with Glick et al.'s findings that benevolent sexism is related to positive evaluations of women in traditional

gender roles (Glick et al., 1997) and further support Glick and Fiske's argument that although benevolent sexism is subjectively positive in feeling tone, it is restrictive toward women (Glick et al., 1996).

It is interesting that gender did not have significant main or interaction effects on paternalistic chivalry, after the effects of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were accounted for. This result is in line with Jost and Banaji's system justification hypothesis (Jost & Banaji, 1994). According to Jost and Banaji, oppressed groups sometimes endorse the system-justifying ideologies of dominant groups in a manner that perpetuates their own oppression. In the current study, women (to the extent that they endorsed benevolent sexism) appear to support paternalistically chivalrous attitudes. Thus, paternalistic chivalry may be a barrier to gender equality because it may discourage women from seeking their own personal success by encouraging them to seek success through a benevolent male partner (cf. Jost & Banaji, 1994).

Although we have reported some interesting findings, further research is needed to explore the construct and discriminant validity of the Paternalistic Chivalry Scale employed in this study. For purposes of the current study, the scale was developed to illustrate that benevolent sexism is related to conservative beliefs about how women should behave during courtship or dating relationships. However, there is potential to develop the construct further by exploring whether or not paternalistic chivalry is related to other sexism scales (e.g., Swim et al., 1995) or scales that measure people's views about male–female intimacy (see Fletcher, 2002). A further limitation of the current study is that we used a student sample. Future researchers should, therefore, examine the psychometric properties of the Paternalistic Chivalry Scale using nonstudent samples.

Finally, our current research mainly focuses on restrictions to women within dating contexts. We thought that such a focus would be appropriate for our sample, which was comprised of university students. This appears to be the age group at which dating is an important aspect of social life. However, dating contexts may not be the only situations in which paternalistic chivalry takes place. Paternalistically chivalrous behavior may also occur within marriages and in work places. Thus, future researchers may want to adapt and further develop our scale in order to make it more appropriate for use within different social contexts. Such research would further our understanding of the social dynamics involved in men putting women on a pedestal and protecting them.

## APPENDIX A: PATERNALISTIC CHIVALRY SCALE

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- It is up to the man to decide where the couple are to have their dinner date.
- It is inappropriate for a woman to make sexual advances toward a man.
- During a date, the man should pull a chair out for the woman to sit.\*
- It is men, not women, who should make the first move to have sex.
- A man should be expected to pay for a woman on the first date.\*
- A woman should not make it obvious that she wants to sleep with a man.
- A good man opens doors for a woman when out on a date.\*
- A woman should not kiss a man unless he has already kissed her.
- It is up to a man to ask a woman out on date.
- A man should make the first move to have sex.
- It is up to the man to make sure a woman enjoys herself during a date.\*
- A woman can not be expected to pay on the first date.\*
- It is inappropriate for a woman to kiss a man first during a date.
- During a date, a man should protect the woman if she is being harassed by other men.\*
- It is up to a man to initiate sexual contact with a woman.
- It is not right for a woman to kiss a man first.
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Note. \* = Items dropped from scale because they loaded highly on the benevolent sexism factor.

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